

SEA WALL AT ST. AUGUSTINE.

[To accompany bill H. R. No. 444.]

MAY 26, 1842.

Mr. C. A. FLOYD, from the Committee on Territories, submitted the following

REPORT:

*The Committee on Territories, to which was referred the memorial of the Mayor and Aldermen of the city of St. Augustine, in the Territory of Florida, together with two several petitions of citizens of the same place, beg leave to submit the following report:*

The petitioners represent that, since the construction of the sea wall in front of that city, the inhabitants have been subject to those autumnal diseases which have hitherto scarcely been known throughout the whole period of its history; that, in the years 1839 and 1841, the fevers, incident to most of the southern latitudes, raged with great violence, cutting off, in the meridian of life, some of their most valuable and estimable citizens; and that the general belief is, that these visitations are to be ascribed principally, if not altogether, to the miasma that arises from the accumulations that are naturally left behind the wall by the ebbing and flowing of the tide; that it is the opinion of medical men that the filling up of the space behind the wall would abate the nuisance, and restore the city to its wonted character for health; and conclude by asking an appropriation of a sum sufficient to effect that object. Annexed to the memorial of the mayor and aldermen is a certified copy of a presentment by the grand jury of St. John's and Musquito counties, made to the superior court in the eastern district of Florida, at the October term of that court in 1841, in which the space or beach between the sea wall and market house is represented as a convenient receptacle of vegetable and animal matter, which find their way into it, and which are not carried off by the free and unobstructed ingress and egress of the tides, and are there left to be exposed to a hot sun, and consequent rapid decay, injurious to the health of the city and annoying to the citizens; and they therefore present it as a nuisance, which requires to be remedied by filling the same with earth or sand, &c.

It further appears, from the same presentment, that, in the northern part of the city and west of the fort, in what is commonly called the ditch or lines, which are frequently filled by high tides and rains, become stagnant, and more or less mixed with decaying vegetables, and, when exposed to a hot sun, emit a stench disagreeable and intolerable to those whose business or residence in the vicinity compels them to be near it, and deleterious to the health of the place.

The committee have given to the subject some reflection; and, although they cannot say that the causes set forth in the memorials are the only ones producing the diseases of 1839 and 1841, yet they may have operated in conjunction with others, and been one of the principal causes in generating disease; and in their investigations of this subject have learned, through the Engineer department, that, when this place was made a subject of complaint, the Chief Engineer directed Major Benham, who had charge of the erection of the wall aforesaid, to open sluices in the wall at the lowest points therein, to which water would naturally flow, and to cause the ground in the rear thereof to be sloped or graded, to facilitate the run of water out and through the sluices on the ebb tides; and, although that order has been partially executed, the difficulty seems not to be obviated; that much vegetable matter is brought in on the flood tides, and scattered about on the shores and in rear of the wall, and which cannot find its way out again through the openings thereof, and is left there to decay; and, in view of these facts, and believing that the health of the city requires that the said space should be filled with earth or sand, &c., have brought in a bill for that purpose.